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ALL CHEQUES to be made payable to 'AUSTRALIAN CHURCH WOMEN' and **NOT** to any individual person.

FEES from **AFFILIATED GROUPS** are due 1st March each year as follows:

Denominational Groups:	\$15.00 per annum
A.C.W. Local Branches:	\$10.00 per annum
Organisations eg YWCA, WCTU, Girls' Brigade :	\$10.00 per annum

ASSOCIATE MEMBERS' FEES due 1st June: \$10.00 per annum
(includes subscription to Newsette)

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CONTRIBUTIONS to Newsette are requested from readers and should be sent to the **EDITOR**: Mrs Beryl McLaughlin
2/15 Morwick Street
STRATHFIELD 2135
(Tel: 9744.8609)

NEW YEAR THOUGHTS.....

Let us walk SOFTLY, friend,
For strange paths lie before us, all untrod;
The New Year, spotless from the hand of God
Is thine and mine, O friend!

Let us walk KINDLY, friend;
We cannot tell how long this life will last,
How soon these precious years be overpast;
Let LOVE walk with us, friend.



NEWSETTE

AUSTRALIAN CHURCH WOMEN - NSW UNIT

A C W seeks:

- ... to unite Australian churchwomen in their allegiance to their Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ;
- ... to provide opportunities for Christian women of different denominations to worship; study and serve together.

PRESIDENT: Mrs Peg Blake Tel: (02) 9524.9997

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE:

Loving greetings to you all; may you know the joy of the Lord and be blessed with abundant good health in 1998.

Throughout Scripture there are many passages to which we can hold for guidance at the start of a new year. A friend told me how he had gone for a week-long retreat, armed with a great stack of books, but a wise old pastor told him to lay them aside, and begin by concentrating and praying Psalm 139. 'This is a favourite of mine and I would leave it with you as prescribed text for 1998! Few other words could assure us so clearly of God's constancy, I'm sure.

His love permeates verses 1-18, and we cannot but begin with praise, as the psalmist reflects on our being created and formed. God knows our rising, sitting and lying down. He knows our thoughts and our words before we speak them. Such knowledge is both comforting and discomfoting to the psalmist, and is often so to us. Even as we are known, faults and all, so we are loved. He knows us by name and loves us. So Isaiah 43:1 reminds us: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine."

What wonderful assurance verses 5-10 of Psalm 139 give us: God's hand is always there to guide us and hold us. Wherever

we are, in deepest darkness or despair, as verses 9-10 tell us: "Even there Your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast." There's no eluding Him! Remember Francis Thompson's "The Hound Of Heaven"

"I fled Him, down the nights and down the days;
I fled Him, down the arches of the years;
I fled Him, down the labyrinthine ways
of my own mind; and in the mist of tears
I hid from Him"

But there was no escaping Him.... "Whither shall I go from thy spirit, or whither shall I flee from thy presence? (V.7)

This year we will walk a prepared path. Our Heavenly Father has the way planned out and if we ask Him, He will reveal it to us - one day at a time. The Living Bible gives verses 2-5 of Psalm 139: "You chart the path ahead of me... every moment you know where I am. You know what I am going to say before I say it. You both precede me and follow me and place your hand of blessing on my head."

May we be very aware of His blessing as we put our trust in Him completely day by day knowing that He leads us in the way everlasting.
With my love, Yours in Christ, Peg.

INSTALLATION of NEW STATE PRESIDENT:

Every two years, the Presidency of ACW moves to a different denomination. For the past two years we have been led very ably by Peg Blake of the Presbyterian Church, and in May this office will pass to REV ELIZABETH WALKER, who has been appointed by the Uniting Church of Australia to lead us for the following two years.

Elizabeth is no stranger to us, having been actively involved in our NSW Unit in past years, and having served as ACW National Treasurer in 1989-1991 when the National Committee was based in New South Wales.

The INSTALLATION SERVICE for Elizabeth will be held at the Uniting Church, 7 Lord Street, Roseville (close to station), on MONDAY, 11th MAY 1998, commencing at 11 a.m. and will be followed by a light lunch.

Elizabeth will add her responsibilities as our President to her ministry as Uniting Church minister at Hamilton, near Newcastle.

ACW NSW STATE CONFERENCE

WEDNESDAY MAY 13 to FRIDAY MAY 15 1998

At SALVATION ARMY TRAINING CENTRE, STANMORE

Theme: "Towards 2000 - Walking Together"

Wednesday 13 from 3 pm: Registration/Dinner/Welcome

Thursday 14: Speakers Dr Kath Donovan MB BS BSc(Agr)
Ruth Myers BA Grad Dip Couns
Evening: Film 'The Colour Of Fear'

Friday 15: Rev Rick & Kayleen Manton - Graduates of Bimbadeen College; pastor at Mt Druitt Presbyterian Church, with a largely Aboriginal Congregation.

C O S T:

LIVE-IN: Wed Evening, Thursday & Friday: \$150.00

DAILY: Thursday: M/T, Lunch, A/T, Dinner \$60.00
Friday: M/T, Lunch, A/T \$45.00

(Registration is included in above prices)

For country members, individual arrangements may be made direct with conference centre to stay prior to or following Conference. Why not come for a few days beforehand and attend the Installation of new State President on Monday, May 11?

Registration Forms available at February Council or from Secretary Jan Harrison (02) 4227.6919 or from Acting Functions Convener Lucelle King (02) 4647.2226.

ADVANCE NOTICE: DIAMOND JUBILEE OF OF ACW NSW:

On 20th July 1998 an ECUMENICAL THANKSGIVING AND LUNCHEON will be held, to celebrate the 60th Anniversary of the beginning of NSW Unit of ACW. The venue will be Salvation Army Sydney Congress Hall, 130 Elizabeth Street, Sydney. Put this date in your diary NOW - further details next Newslette.

FELLOWSHIP OF THE LEAST COIN:

I am pleased to report that Volume 14 of Circle of Prayer has now been received, and plenty of copies are available on request. The theme "Christ: Our Vision And Hope" was chosen after much discussion with regional representatives, who shared their ideas about different issues facing people from all over the world.

In her introduction, Shirin Samuel (Executive Secretary of FLC International Committee) writes: "It was shown that many times women undergo a bewildering experience and need assurance and acceptance in their communities. Above all, everyone needs to find hope in the resurrected Jesus Christ in the midst of afflictions, disappointments and discouragements."

This volume has been produced in English and Spanish, and will be translated into other local languages. Shirin's fervent prayer is: "that the reflections and prayers in these meditations will broaden our vision to seek hope as a community of devoted and committed people of God's kingdom."

I do hope you will obtain a copy, either for your own, or your group's use when participating in Fellowship of the Least Coin. Cost \$2 per copy or \$2.50 posted. I will have copies available at February Council, or you can write to me: (125/3 Homeland Ave Carlingford 2118) or phone me on (02) 9872.1719 and I will be happy to send you a copy or copies.

It has been encouraging to see the response from World Community Day in October, and from church fellowship groups from all over NSW. I have been busy sending out receipts and letters, and I thank all for their prayers and support.

We commence 1998 with the assurance of our theme - "Christ IS our vision and hope" - Praise be to God.

Shirley Wells, FLC Convener.

ADDENDUM to above: Advice has been received that two FLC Grants applied for by NSW Unit have been granted as follows:

Somali Women Project at Auburn - \$4000 which will be used to provide a teacher to teach the women English and Sewing;

Brenton Carey College in Karachi, Pakistan, where the late Dss Barkat Das worked - \$4000 which will provide a fire escape, and a generator so that the girls can study at night, which is impossible at present as electricity goes off at night.

WINIFRED KIEK SCHOLARSHIP:

Christmas greetings and remembrance to all their ACW friends were received from several of our past Scholars, and these included some news of their doings, as follows:

DOREEN TIE CHIN BING, 1990 Scholar from Sarawak: "I hope one day to visit Australia again with my family, and be able to tell you about my work and how the school (for physically and intellectually disabled children) is going. Our daughter, Heather Ashley is one year old on December 23. She is really a bundle of energy. We daily pray for guidance to nurture and guide her to be a godly person. (Photo of Heather enclosed). Recently our country was engulfed in haze. It was a really awful experience; we all had to stay indoors and our State Government declared an emergency, no one being allowed to work except for essential occupations. A lot of people fell ill and our hospitals had to treat a few thousand cases every day. I hope the Indonesian Government learned something through this experience and stops all these slash and burn activities."

RACHEL SOBANA KANLY, 1991 Scholar from Nagercoil, Sth India:

"I always think of Australia and ACW and I'm really grateful to you all. Well, I was delivered of a girl baby on October 24 and am on 3 months maternity leave. She is just like her brother Brian (4½). I return to work on January 26. My life as Principal of the School of Nursing is really busy, challenging and lots of responsibility. We had good results in Annual Examinations; our School was inspected by Registration Council and by Board of Nursing Education, and they were satisfied with our work. As everywhere, there is lots of politics but I try not to change the policy and procedures of my own (which people don't like!) Sometimes I get fed up with Administration, but as this is God's will I persevere, and leave everything in His hands."

NIGHAT GULZAR, 1994 Scholar from Lahore, Pakistan: "We are busy at the office and at home, as Christmas is near. For this joyous occasion my husband Asif joins me in wishing you all the blessings of His peace and joy, with a prayer that the new year ahead will hold good health and much happiness. In Pakistan, we are having very cold and dry weather, both climatically and politically. I am sure you have read a lot in your newspapers about the cold war our government is going through."

Beth Finlay WKS Convener.

ASIAN CHURCH WOMEN'S CONFERENCE SERVICE:

ACW NSW Unit held the annual ACWC Service on November 17 in Lakemba Uniting Church. The Service, which was prepared by women of the Philippines, centred on the theme: "God Calls The Church To Be The Bearers Of Hope."

The Service was conducted in English, whilst the hymns were sung and scriptures read in Korean, Chinese and Vietnamese. Participation by men and women of these nationalities added colour and contrast. The guest preacher, Rev John Ting, of Crown Street Chinese Presbyterian Church gave a challenging and inspiring message. His relating of real-life encounters with the drug addict, the prisoner, the leper, the people on the margins, and their response to the gospel, touched the hearts of everyone present. He said all people have dignity and worth before God and it is the Christian's duty to love and care for those without hope. Hope allows the soul to experience freedom and to know that in our increasingly hard world, the church has active compassion and is an instrument of hope for the hopeless. He challenged all present to give integrity and credibility to the Church's message by "practicing what we preach." The quote was made: "When all has been said and done, there is usually more said than done!"

Musical contributions were presented by the 'Women's Place' Choir Group from Lakemba Uniting Church, enhanced by their being dressed in traditional Korean costume. More than 100 people were present at the Service, and afterwards enjoyed fellowship over lunch. Following this the final Council for 1997 brought to a conclusion a great year of activity and blessing; also the conclusion of the sale of attractive Australian calendars, the proceeds going towards our Unit's annual commitment of \$500 to the Asian Church Women's Conference Endowment Fund.

Joan Tong, Member of ACWC General Committee.

VALE -- DORIS MITCHELL O.A.M.

Doris, who was well-known to many ACW people, died in October. She had served as State President, National President and as National Secretary. With Anglican Board of Missions, she had been Federal Youth Secretary, Secretary of their Federal Women's Auxiliary and of the Sydney Auxiliary; ABM Head Office Accountant and on several other committees; she was also author of a number of books. We give thanks for her life and honour her memory.

CHURCHES SIGN STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT TO INDIGENOUS PEOPLE:

Major Joan Tong, President of NSW Ecumenical Council, and Divisional Commander Lieut-Colonel Carl Schmidtke participated at a special Service where an apology was offered on behalf of churches in NSW to indigenous people. Anglican Archbishop of Sydney, Harry Goodhew and Catholic Archbishop of Sydney, Cardinal Clancy were among 21 church leaders from 21 denominations who together declared sorrow for what indigenous people had suffered. They joined 2000 people gathered in St Mary's Cathedral, Sydney, on Human Rights Day, December 10, 1997, to express their commitment to reconciliation. The NSW Ecumenical Council hosted the Service, an "Ecumenical Liturgy of Repentance, Solidarity and Commitment."

Linda Burney, Chairperson, NSW Committee of the Council For Reconciliation, accepted an apology and an act of commitment to the indigenous people of Australia, made on behalf of NSW churches. In her response, she referred to the apology as being an action of common decency, which she was happy to acknowledge. She said she felt overwhelmed by the amount of public support. Maisie Cavanagh, Coordinator for the Aboriginal Catholic Ministry in Western Sydney, led the worship with Rev Ray Williamson, Executive Secretary of NSW Ecumenical Council.

The Statement signed and read out by the church leaders reads:

- "....We acknowledge, with deep regret and sadness, the long history of failure to recognise the spirituality and the authentic culture of the indigenous people of this country.
- We are painfully aware that this failure has been the cause of many injustices: dispossession of land; removal of children from their families; loss of culture, language and spirituality.
- In humility, we, on behalf of the churches in New South Wales, apologise to our indigenous brothers and sisters.
- With resolve, we commit ourselves to reconciliation, so that all may share with equity and justice and live peacefully in this land that is Australia."

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people led various parts of the liturgy, including a 'smoking ritual' performed by Max Eulo; a welcome by a Joyce Woodberry, an Elder from

La Perouse; songs - "Run, Daisy, Run" sung by Lea Purcell, "We Remember How You Loved Us" led by Peter Sasbatine, Executive Secretary of the Aboriginal & Islander Commission of the National Council of Churches in Australia; a story told by Noel Kitchener, and a story by Pastor Peter Walker. A group of black and white children, the La Perouse Dancers, presented a dance of reconciliation, and later distributed black, red and yellow ribbons to every person present.

Intercessions included prayers in the Torres Strait (Western Islands) language, in Vietnamese and in Tetun (East Timor). The Governor of NSW, Sir Gordon Samuels, read from the prophet Isaiah and Major Joan Tong read the gospel passage.

Sir Ronald Wilson, in preaching, spoke of how reconciliation was part of "God's Dreaming." Sharing from his experience of chairing the National Inquiry Into The Separation of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Children, he said he had never been exposed to such pain before. Emphasising the need for a national apology, Sir Ronald noted the role churches had played in the policy of assimilation, his own among them, and the need to recognise this "with shame and regret."

"It was a memorable and moving occasion," said the Rev Dr Ray Williamson, Executive Secretary of the NSW Ecumenical Council, "in which the longing by many Australians, of a multitude of backgrounds, for a just reconciliation with Australia's indigenous people, was deeply evident."

Joan Tong, President NSW Ecumenical Council.

EDITOR'S NOTE: A number of ACW Executive members were present at this moving Service, including Heather Badgery, Marie Majoor, myself and some others.

From New ACW PRESIDENT: (now based in Queensland)

"I have heard it said that Australian Church Women is a group of many women of different faiths. This I do not believe! Certainly, as individuals, we are very different from each other - the administration of our respective churches may be different; the observance of the Sacraments may have different emphases and practices; our mode of worship may be traditional or contemporary, liturgical or free, but we are united in our common belief in God, the Father Almighty and in Jesus Christ, His Son and our Saviour."

{From ACW National News}

NEWS FROM NUNGALINYA:

Some years ago, Nungalinya Aboriginal Bible Training College in Darwin received support from World Community Day Offer-tories, and it has been suggested that this strategic college, which is a joint project of the Anglican, Uniting & Catholic churches, may be a worthy recipient of a Fellowship of the Least Coin Grant.

Students come from very different backgrounds, some from a highly urbanised city with good basic education; others from remote Arnhem Land communities with very little education or literacy skills.

Elizabeth Caldwell has been Literacy Co-ordinator at Nungalinya for the past 7 years, where she is supported by Bush Church Aid Society (BCA). In her Christmas letter, she gave an update of some of the activities. She enjoys travelling to the parishes in Arnhem Land to support literacy work, and loves to hear the stories of God's action in the lives of indigenous men and women of faith. She writes:

"I have just been out to Numbulwar (on the Rose River on the Gulf of Carpentaria), which has the dubious fame of being the hookworm capital of Australia. To rid the soil of hookworm would require the whole town to be moved, dogs and all, for some 7 to 10 years!"

1997 was busy again. Graduation Night was a great celebration, with awards given for students in most courses. There was a lot of ceremony as some of the traditional people came forward to receive their awards. Arnhem Land students like to celebrate the significance of graduating and their families like to honour them by clustering around, bringing them forward in a special dance which is related to the graduate's totem - you could think of a totem like a club membership that has its own insignia and symbols, like guides or scouts. One of the students was danced forward to a Macassan dance - I could pick out the depiction of people sailing in a boat, getting close to shore, being initially rejected by those on shore, and then accepted. The dancers were all very good.

Looking forward to 1998, we still battle with a deficit budget, but there seem to be many prospective students, coming from all over Australia - I have a heavy teaching load for first term, and expect to visit Numbulwar quite a bit, and also Groote Eylandt."

THE 'PATIENT SUPPORT' OFFICE:

This is a newly-established service which assists consumers to understand and uphold their rights when dealing with the health services. The Patient Support Office plays a major role in assisting patients/consumers or friends and families to resolve concerns about the health service or treatment they have received.

People who have concerns with a health service can talk to a Patient Support Officer to find out how best to resolve a problem. Many problems, upsets and concerns can be resolved locally and quickly by identifying the problem and supporting the person to take action to resolve it. The Office deals with concerns about all types of health care, including public and private hospitals, nursing homes, community health services and doctors; it also covers dentists, optometrists, psychologists and alternative or natural therapists. Its officers are ideally placed to deliver this service because they are independent of the Health Department, Area Health Services, hospitals or other health services.

For information contact: Brian McMahon, Level 4, Vinden House, Royal North Shore Hospital, Pacific Hwy St Leonards NSW 2065. Phone (02) 9926.8184.

(Condensed from National Council of Women News)

INTERDENOMINATIONAL MISSIONS NEWS FROM SUNDRY PLACES:

Many of us support the work of such organisations as Bible Society, The Leprosy Mission, Prison Fellowship. Here are some items of news from these:

THE BIBLE SOCIETY DISTRIBUTION TEAM in IRAQ: The difficulties facing the average Iraqi on a day-to-day basis are so daunting; with the UN Agreement we hope the situation will improve, especially that medicines will be made available at hospitals & clinics. It is extremely hard to live under an embargo that has lasted for 6 years, remembering that the country was at war for 10 years previous to that.

As a team, however, we have also seen the light of the Gospel in many people we meet and work with - in small villages and in the big city of Baghdad. It was really special to help distribute the Scripture Calendars - all over the country people received them with tremendous gratitude - once more they felt that they had not been forgotten. We were also distributing the 'Bible For All Ages - 365 Stories.' We

had expected it to be a success but not to the degree it was. At our next visit we found that whole families had started gathering in someone's house to read a story every evening. You could tell from the way the people responded that they recognise the Bible Society as being a vital part in the life of the Church in Iraq. We who have been privileged to work here know that we have received more through this heart-link with our brothers and sisters in Iraq than they have received from us."

THE LEPROSY MISSION: From Margaret Mead, back in Democratic Republic of The Congo (Zaire) after being evacuated to London more than a year ago:

"We continue to hear amazing stories. I met a man who left the army because he said he could not be a soldier and a Christian. Although he had left in 1994, his name was still on some army lists, so when they came looking for "the enemy" they came for him. He was praying at the time he heard them come in, so prayed long and loud. They waited till he had finished, then took him outside, laid him on the floor and put a gun to his stomach. When they pulled the trigger - CLICK, then CLICK again. They raised the gun to test it - BIAM, BIAM - it fired. Back to his stomach - CLICK, CLICK. By this time they had 'freaked out' and let him go. They came back and tried again later but the same thing happened. This man is a pastor and obviously the Lord has some more he wants him to do. You see miracles do still happen."

PRISON FELLOWSHIP INDIA - 'Precious Children' Cared For: As in many countries, when a child's parents are imprisoned, the little boy or girl is expected to become self-sufficient. This led to the founding of the Precious Children Care Home. When PF India was first founded its main focus was on serving juvenile and women prisoners serving short sentences but when they began to include lifers and inmates with long sentences, they learned about the children and realised there were those outside the prison who needed their care too. Children from 5-14 are spared from living on the streets; They are provided with safe, clean housing, nutritious meals, medical care, elementary education and vocational training. The children attend a local school. Part of their regimen is writing letters to their imprisoned parents and reading the responses. The Home strives to help them maintain their family contacts. In addition to the benefit to the children, this provides a powerful Christian witness in a largely non-Christian country and has given PFIndia credibility.